WRITTEN TESTIMONY

COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
JOINT PUBLIC HEARING

The Committee on Public Works and the Environment
Carol Schwartz, Chair
and
The Committee on Human Services
Sandy Allen, Chair

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COMMANDER
BALTIMORE DISTRICT, U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Good morning, Councilmember Schwartz and Councilmember Allen. I am Colonel Robert J. Davis, Commander of the Baltimore District of the US Army Corps of Engineers. Thank you for your invitation to testify before this committee. Today, I would like to discuss our progress at the Spring Valley Formerly Used Defense Site (FUDS) since your July 2003 hearing.

Over the past year, we have continued to make significant progress in ascertaining the scope of Department of Defense (DOD) contamination at the site and in removing any hazardous materials found. As a result, our project scope has expanded, extending the completion date through 2010. The growth in project scope is due primarily to two major factors, namely the investigation and remediation of the Lot 18 site on American University

property, and the remediation and restoration of arsenic contaminated soils on residential properties. These factors increased the total project costs by $35 million. To meet these needs, the Department of the Army has extended its annual $11 million commitment through 2010.

Our working relationship with our project partners – Region III of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the District of Columbia Department of Health – has never been better. We are working together in an open and professional manner, meeting monthly, setting annual goals collectively, making project decisions together, and strengthening the involvement of leadership from each of our agencies. We have made an equal commitment to keeping the DC Council and other elected officials more informed, noting my commitment to brief the members of this body personally and to continue e-mail distribution of our monthly project updates that we started in November 2003. These stronger relationships enable us to carry on our key responsibility of removing contamination from the community while identifying and integrating stakeholder concerns into the evolving project priorities.

To show how the partners capture any and all project issues, let me summarize the three-level process we built to identify, track, and resolve stakeholder needs. Level 1 priorities are discussed at our monthly

meetings and form the backbone of our annual project work. Level 2 priorities are potential areas of interest (AOIs) that need to be researched to determine if any additional investigation is needed in the future. This research is conducted by the AOI Task Force, comprised of representatives from each of the three agencies and the Restoration Advisory Board's technical advisor. Level 3 priorities are those submitted by other stakeholders and placed on the Evergreen List, which we started in 2002 to track concerns that need to be considered by the partners before the project can be considered complete. The partners and the RAB have agreed to review the Evergreen List items on a regular basis. Based on these reviews, various items on this list can and have moved up to Level 2, the AOITF review process, or Level 1, active partnering coordination.

Regarding our Hazardous and Toxic Waste (HTW) work, we have sampled 96% of the roughly 1,500 residential and commercial properties, and continue to seek permission for access to the remaining unsampled properties.

The sampling results have identified 140 residential properties and lots with levels of arsenic contamination requiring response actions, and we have successfully completed soil removals for a total of 28 properties thus far. These completed properties were those with the highest levels of

arsenic. We have an extensive community outreach program that includes meeting with each property owner or resident before and during property remediation. As a result of our efforts, we have received several letters of appreciation from homeowners, who praised our “thoughtful communication and coordination,” and our “attention to detail, particularly in regards to their safety.”

We expect to conduct soil removals at approximately 107 additional residential properties throughout the course of the next several years. The levels of arsenic contamination in the soils at these properties are low enough to allow for this longer time frame without posing unacceptable risks to residents or their construction and lawn care contractors.

Listening to members of the community who were concerned over the cutting down of valuable and non-replaceable trees, we initiated a test of phytoremediation as a potential alternative to the excavation approach. This recently developed technology uses ferns to remove excess arsenic from the soil. Our initial test results are encouraging and we are further integrating this innovative technology into our plans for the FY-05 growing season.

In addition to our arsenic work, we have sampled for other chemical warfare materials, agent breakdown products, explosives, and other

compounds - both on the surface and below the surface - at approximately 20% of the Spring Valley lots and residential properties. Our extensive sampling effort has not identified any other chemicals of concern at the site.

One of the DC Council's and stakeholders' concerns identified at the July 2003 hearing was potential indoor air exposure. In response, we conducted complex sampling of sub-basement soil gas at two properties adjacent to the Lot 18 debris field to determine if any potential emissions from WWI-related contamination were entering the house from the subsurface. The results indicate that these two residential homes are not threatened by air emissions from any World War-I contamination.

One other important effort worth noting is the start of a comprehensive groundwater quality study. This study will determine if chemicals used at American University Experiment Station have impacted the local groundwater and, if so, whether they pose any risk to the local water supply. One of the chemicals we will analyze for is perchlorate. I should note that Thomas Jacobus, Chief of the Washington Aqueduct, is in attendance, in case there are any specific questions regarding ongoing perchlorate analyzes on drinking water from the Dalecarlia Reservoir. We are developing our groundwater investigation plan in full coordination with our partners. We provided the RAB with a draft overview of our planned

investigation last spring, and have continued to keep the RAB informed as to our progress. We will present our investigation plan to the community once our partners and we have completed formulating the approach.

As for our Military Munitions Response Program (MMRP) efforts, we have completed geophysical investigative work at 37 of the top 50 American University Lots and residential properties prioritized by the project partners in FY02. We performed geophysics on 14 of these properties in FY04. The partners are now reviewing the data from these 14 properties and will select which of these properties will require intrusive investigation this fiscal year. As I speak with you today, we are in the field performing geophysical surveys on 9 additional properties. 3 of these properties were selected from the remaining top 50 properties to be investigated and 6 are being surveyed in support of our ongoing arsenic soil removals.

Some of the properties that are surveyed in Spring Valley do require intrusive investigation of the subsurface. We have completed this intrusive work on 20 properties thus far, having excavated anomalies on 7 residential properties in FY04. This work yielded various metal debris, including harmless scrap metal from munitions - no chemical warfare materiel or intact munitions were found.

Lastly, we also performed a focused site investigation at the Spaulding and Captain Rankin areas near Woodway Lane and American University grounds, where the remnants of a gun pit and several bunkers remain. Out of 240 subsurface anomalies investigated, we recovered only a few harmless ordnance-related scrap metal items, which we removed from the area.

Regarding the investigation of possible burial locations, the Corps has remediated a portion of American University known as Lot 18. The Corps is conducting the investigative work at Lot 18 using engineered controls that provide redundant safety measures to protect the public and Corps personnel doing the removals. Safety of our work force and the surrounding community is our highest priority. We have extensively explained the details of our operation to the RAB, surrounding residents and other concerned stakeholders, American University employees and elected officials through a series of open houses and small group meetings, tours of the actual work site, and via our phone and e-mail ring-down system.

The work conducted last summer at Lot 18 progressed at a slower pace than originally predicted. We have taken measures to increase the

rate of remediation, including doubling the number of soil-sifting personnel and improving the de-watering measures on the site.

In closing, I will briefly touch upon a key community stakeholder concern, community health. Over the past several years, the Corps provided funding to the District of Columbia Department of Health and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to conduct bio-monitoring for children at the Child Development Center at AU and for several dozen residents of properties with elevated levels of arsenic in soil. We also provide the ATSDR with a variety of project data in support of its ongoing health evaluation, which is expected to be finalized in early 2005.

Over this past year, we continued to address specific health-related concerns at several individual properties, including two properties whose owners spoke at the July 2003 hearing and were identified in the recent NW Current articles. In our efforts to date on these specific properties, we have not found any ordnance items, labware, chemical agent or soil contamination, other than arsenic, considered by the partners to be of potential concern.

In our ongoing efforts to be responsive to stakeholder health concerns, the partners reviewed the health-related actions we have taken to date at our October meeting. We also explored potential new steps we

can take. This meeting was attended by the Chair for the local Advisory Neighborhood Commission and the RAB's technical advisor. Based on these discussions we are developing a draft Spring Valley health issues initiative, which we will finalize by consensus with our regulatory partners.

In conclusion, we have worked very hard during the past year to define the extent of DOD contamination and solidify the partnership process. We will continue to seek full and open consultation with the community and we remain absolutely committed to aggressively responding to risks associated with former DOD activities at the Spring Valley site.

I would like to thank this committee for the opportunity to speak and I am prepared to answer your questions regarding the Corps' efforts at this site.